

This amendment contains recommendations both from the SBA inspector general and the GAO for combating these reports of fraud and addresses vulnerabilities in the Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned small business program, the HUBZone program, and the 8(a) program. Additionally, the bill will work to change the culture at SBA to make the process of suspensions and debarments more transparent.

In order to effectively execute the small business contracting programs, the SBA needs a comprehensive framework to provide effective certification, continued surveillance and monitoring, and robust enforcement throughout the SBA's contracting portfolio. This bill aims to increase criminal prosecutions as well as suspension and debarments for businesses found to have attained contracts through fraudulent means, and requires the SBA to submit a report to Congress annually detailing the specific data on all suspensions, debarments, and cases referred to the Department of Justice for criminal prosecutions.

My amendment provides the SBA more stringent oversight capacity across all the SBA contracting programs. It is SBA's duty to utilize every fraud prevention measure at its disposal and this amendment puts the tools in place to punish the bad actors that have infiltrated the SBA contracting programs.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THANKING BETTY HAMILTON

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I think most of us involved in public life realize that few people meet us and many more people meet those who represent us. That is why if you are a success as a Congressman or Senator or as an elected official, you really have to rely on the people who work for you, who time and again will represent you. Their approach, their sense of caring, their promptness, their courtesy will reflect on you.

If you are lucky—really lucky—you will have some extraordinary people working for you who cover you with glory every single day—even when you don't know it.

I started in politics and was lucky to have two early mentors. As a college student, the Senator who held this seat, Paul Douglas, inspired me to take an interest in government. Later, there was a man he introduced me to, Paul Simon, whom I succeeded in the Senate. I spent more time with Paul Simon, and he truly was my mentor. I

inherited many of my good habits from him.

I also inherited something else. I inherited one of his biggest fans and hardest workers, who came on my staff. Her name is Betty Hamilton. She first had her brush with public service in 1984 when she volunteered to work on the Senate campaign of Paul Simon. Paul had a way of bringing out the best in people and bringing the best people into politics. Betty sure fit the bill.

In that first campaign, Betty used to pull her two toddlers, Will and Ben, in a little wagon as she walked door-to-door in her neighborhood, knocking on doors and dropping campaign literature for Paul Simon. She was part of an army of volunteers who helped Paul score an upset victory in a very tough year, politically. Later, she signed on as volunteer coordinator and office manager for Paul Simon's reelection campaign.

After that election, Betty joined my staff when I was still in the House of Representatives. She has been with me ever since.

Betty works in casework. It sounds simple and routine, but it is not. Most of her work is with senior citizens. If an older person in southern Illinois calls my office because they are having a problem with Social Security or Medicare or some other Federal program or agency, Betty most often takes that call.

The people she works with often have no place else to turn. They can't afford lawyers. They just need someone who cares and who is competent. Maybe they have been incorrectly denied Medicare or disability payments or some other benefits they are entitled to, and they have tried but cannot cut through the bureaucracy to resolve their problems. Many of them are desperate. Some have spent every penny they have ever saved and have nothing left. They are on the verge sometimes of even losing their homes.

Betty Hamilton listens to them and she gets to work making phone calls, writing letters, sending e-mails, trying to make the wheels of government turn the way they should. She is an advocate for fairness and good government.

Over the years, Betty has talked with more than 8,000 people in Illinois. They are the lucky ones. She has saved hundreds of people from losing their homes. She has given them hope.

I go back on Fridays to Springfield, and I usually have a couple of thank-yous on my desk, and they always relate to staffers who have done a good job. Usually Betty's name is on them. I can't count the number of people who have written me about the work she has done. They say: Thank you for helping me. I greatly appreciate it. It is good to be able to pay my bills and take care of my kids, and a special thanks to Betty Hamilton.

I know Betty worries some nights about the people she tried to help. She has come in on many Saturdays to write one more letter or make one

more call she thinks might help. Just last week she helped someone in my State collect \$31,000 in disability payments that had been incorrectly denied them.

Like most people who grew up in St. Louis, Betty is a die-hard St. Louis Cardinals baseball fan. So she knows what I mean when I say I consider Betty Hamilton the Stan Musial of casework. Like Stan the Man, who played for the Cardinals for 22 years, she has worked for me for two decades. Like him, she is a modest person, and like Stan Musial, Betty has compiled a long and consistent record of success that is likely to remain unbroken for a very long time.

Betty didn't take to government initially. She has a master's degree in horticulture. Four years ago, she and her husband John, then retired from the State of Illinois, decided they would buy a farm near Springfield where they could raise produce—some of the best green beans and tomatoes you ever tasted. You could find them at the Springfield Farmers' Market downtown on Wednesdays and Saturdays. I know, I have seen them there the last two Saturdays. Don't miss their stand; it is the best. That is where I am going to be able to see her from now on.

Betty is retiring from my office, and I will miss her. More importantly, the people who have had her fine public service will miss her too. We are going to miss her greatly.

BEST WISHES TO SARA FROELICH

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, back in the year 2000, my wife Loretta and I went to the Democratic Convention in Los Angeles, and we ran into a young college coed from Illinois. She was a student at Wesleyan University in Bloomington, IL—originally from the Twin Cities of Minnesota. At that time, her name was Sara Nelson.

Sara Nelson had a class assignment to cover the convention for a weekly newspaper in Illinois. She was out there sleeping on the floor of somebody's apartment and wandering around trying to write a story for a weekly newspaper. She was a bright-smiling young woman, and Loretta and I liked her instantly.

As fate would have it, we ended up on the same plane flying back to Chicago when the convention had ended. We landed at Midway late, and as Loretta and I were leaving the baggage section, we saw Sara Nelson sitting on her bag by the curb. We said: Sara, where are you going?

She said: I missed my bus down to Bloomington—which is a little over 100 miles away—and I have to wait for one that will come later tonight.

I said: You're in luck because Loretta and I are driving down there. Get in the car.

She hopped in the car with us, and we drove down to Bloomington.

During the course of the trip, we got to know her and liked her even more.